

The Potential of Children's Literature in Education and Environmental Ethics: Linguistic and Literary Approaches

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ABSTRACT. Environmental issues are no longer a concern of one field, collaboration of several scientific disciplines will provide many solutions to save and preserve the environment which incidentally cannot be released from human life. This paper aims to uncover a number of concepts about the potential that exist in the study of language and literature in contributing to the development of education and environmental ethics, in the context of Indonesia's territory and globally. Some crucial questions in this paper are: 1) whether children's literature can be material and media in fostering education and environmental ethics; 2) how is the environmental representation in children's literature viewed from the perspective of language and literature studies? The method used in this paper is the study of literature. This paper is expected to produce a new approach in instilling environmental education. In this case, covering environmental awareness and ethics, especially among children, as an effort to care for and develop human life more advanced and sustainable. Based on a comprehensive literature review, it was found that children's literature as an art product that offers imaginative as well as didactic stories can be a source of material for environmental education among children.

Keywords: *Children's Literature, Education, Environmental Ethics, Linguistic, Literary Approaches.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Humans are responsible for extreme changes in the world. This statement has been described in many world news. One of them, Ipsos Mori (in Stibbe, 2015: 127) has conducted a survey in 2014 to count people in various countries about whether they agree with "the cause of climate change is humans". The survey results showed 93% of respondents from China agreed, 64% of respondents from the UK, while respondent from America only 54% agreed. This includes discussing current environmental problems in Indonesia. The unbalanced environment gradually disrupts human life and the entire ecosystem there. Erratic weather changes, environmental pollution, outbreaks of diseases that cannot be changed, and change social conflicts and relationships that are wrong because cultural communication is a series of changes that can occur at any time.

The education world actually has sample room to be a pioneer in protecting and saving the environment, especially through basic education. Basic education is the basis for teaching good and deeply rooted habits and character, for example caring for the environment. Learning materials can be packaged in such a way as to invite children to be close to the environment both physically

and emotionally early on. Through reading materials consumed by children both at school and at home, will make a significant contribution to the growth of children's sensitivity to the environment.

Children's reading material or children's literature offers a variety of perspectives that are relatively new for children. Literature is a work that gives pleasure and understanding to the reader. By reading literature, it will indirectly help children build attitudes about themselves and the environment. How to position yourself in the middle of the environment and how to interact with the environment itself. Fiction and nonfiction stories, poetry and folklore that are loaded with local wisdom will help children in developing critical thinking skills and foster a sharp imagination (Nurgiyantoro, 2010: 7).

Answering global challenges on environmental issues, inspiring experts in the study of language and literature to take part. Evidenced by the establishment of good collaboration between ecological and language disciplines. The ecology of language or ecolinguistics considers that there is a significant interrelation between language and the environment. The development of science makes the definition of the environment also develops more broadly. The environment is seen as a broad and

complex entity, not merely a biological ecosystem but also encompassing the social and cultural aspects of a speech community. The ultimate goal to be achieved from the development of social sciences that hold ecology within the framework of the concept is the growth of an ecosystem that is believed to save the environment and nature inhabited by humans.

Ecology in children's literature aims that children reach a higher character than just understanding, namely loving the environment. "Loving" always involves positive emotions and conscience, while "understanding" is limited to cognition. The position of "loving a thing" will encourage someone to give more real actions and reactions, while "understanding" is not the case. Someone can understand something well, but sometimes it does not lead to bold and real actions and reactions.

2. THE STATE OF THE ART

Several studies that have been carried out by a number of researchers regarding the interrelation of language, literature, and environmental education in children's literature Mishra (2016) examine environmental issues in literary works in terms of an ecocritical perspective. Mishra found two interesting things. First, ecocriticism of literary texts emerge from and are oriented to human concern and human interaction with nature. Second, ecocriticism became a perspective that inspired three great American writers, namely Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), Margaret Fuller (1810-1850), and Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862) in writing works that celebrate nature as a life force .

Sajid published his research in 2016, entitled *Ecocriticism and Environmental Imagination in Kindergarten Children*. This research is motivated by the experience of researchers who are interested in seeing the kindergarten children he teaches often show his admiration for nature and the environment. Researchers apply the theory of eco-criticism to study environmental imagination in children's literature. The main book he studied was the Book of *Iron Giant by Huges*. From his study, the results obtained that Iron Giant can be read by children of all ages. When children read Iron Giant, researchers find that children can understand stories and enjoy them. Researchers also stated that reading stories, literature, poetry, and fiction bring children to different understandings about things, their world becomes borderless, and they get a unique focus that they cannot achieve from anywhere else. Thus the researcher concludes that it is important to be honest and extend children's experiences of reading books or asking questions because the whole is an authentic process for children to understand the world.

Sugiarti (2017) in her research entitled Cultural Ecology in Literature as a Character Former of Students. Literary works as works of art are always related to the reality of human life in various dimensions, including culture that grows in society. Literature cannot depart from emptiness to instill the values of wisdom, happiness requires culture and values of wisdom that must fill it. Literature has broad possibilities to make itself a "storage" of human values, the values which in reality are often cornered distorting and even disappearing. The findings of this study are that the cultural environment can make a significant contribution to humans who are in that environment. Culture in the sense of the whole ideas, actions, and results of human work obtained from the learning process. Culture can be formed from nature. Good habits and lifestyles are formed from nature through consistent routines. Many good habits and behaviors are transferred from literature to the reader. therefore literature is said to be of quality if it meets the criteria of truth, honesty, beauty, and eternity.

3. LANGUAGE, LITERATURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Language is a human communication tool, can be realized in oral and written form. Language is born in society, then develops according to the needs of the user community. Language can have a good effect and can also have a bad impact. The complexity of language problems arises if a language has experienced interaction with other languages and cultures that live around it. because the problem is no longer only at the limit of the form other than the question of meaning and self-identity. So that understanding and language attitude can't be ignored. Haugen (1972: 326) illustrates that language is actually something that is in the brain or cognitive society which is manifested in the form of linguistic features. This feature or linguistic code then connects a language speaker with other speakers also with their environment.

Literature as part of a work of art utilizes language as its medium, to tell the reality of humanity which is imaginative facts, with the aim of providing lessons and entertainment to the reader. Literature functions as a supporter of normative effective cultural values. That is, literature has the power to express everything related to human life and all its changes. Therefore, literature has a coherent and integrated structure regarding the social environment and the natural environment and its time. Stanton (2012: 112-114) argues that the creation of literary works has to do with the author's worldview shaped by his various life experiences.

In the development of language and literary studies as a humanities science, concern for

environmental conditions is increasingly being exploited wildly to disturb the balance of human life and the surrounding ecosystem. The environment in view of language and literature studies is not only in the physical area but also in the social and cultural spheres. Language and literature as cultural products clearly have an interaction with the environment in which a speech society develops.

Language as a primary sign system forms the world model for the wearer, that is, as a model which in principle is used to realize the conceptual human being in interpreting everything both inside and outside himself. Furthermore, literature that uses language media depends on the primary system held by the language. In other words, a literary work can only be understood through language. Language is a tool for writers to express their observations of natural and life phenomena in the form of stories.

Literary language is the main media for expressing literary ideas. The idea that lives in the mind and soul of the author is formed from inner turmoil and is based on the background of the physical and cultural environment that surrounds the author in his creative process. So that the presence of the environment in the stage of language and literature studies cannot be eliminated.

Language, literature and environment are one unit. Literary works that can be read utilize written language as a medium. The choice of words, style of language and certain metaphors and diction in literary works is not done haphazardly by the author. All calculated well with a big goal. Not without reason, the authors' expertise in putting unique lexical and grammatical harmoniously in their discourse is influenced by the physical environment and cultural ecology that is deeply recorded in the author's cognition. Until not infrequently we can find out the author's identity and background from the use of styles in literary texts.

4. ECOLINGUISTICS

Ecolinguistics is an interdisciplinary that combines two fields of science namely ecology and linguistics. Philosophically, these two studies have very different material objects, but in other points of view they actually have a pretty close relationship. Language is the result of a culture that lives and develops in a complex environment, in which there are not only humans who are the producers and users of languages, but also social and cultural space as their background. While ecology comes from the words *eco* and *logos*, which means environmental science. Ecolinguistics is part of linguistic studies that specifically examines the relationship between human language and the ecological environment, namely the physical universe environment, both the biotic environment and the abiotic environment,

social environment, cultural environment or culture of a language society (Nuzwaty: 2019: 39). Basically, ecolinguistic studies are rooted in concepts that had already been developed by a linguist named Edwar Sapir. In his book "Linguistic and Environment" published in 1912, Sapir introduces the intertwined interaction between two fields of science namely language and environment. The term "environment" in this book does not yet refer to the ecological meaning as it is developing now, but the definition has led to the environment or physical and social areas.

In 1970 an expert named Einar Haugen conducted research on language involving ecological issues. For two years Haugen worked on research on the topic of language in collaboration with ecology, until finally this concept was presented in a seminar. The publication of the book "The Ecology of Language" written by Haugen two years later marks the beginning of the journey of ecolinguistic theory as a scientific study. Haugen (1972) defines the ecology of language as a study of the interrelation between language and its environment. The language environment referred to Haugen in his book is the environment of the language user community in a particular region.

Verbal expressions such as lexicons or metaphors in a discourse, literary works for example, which are used to represent nature or the environment have a function to preserve nature and raise public awareness about environmental ethics. Stibbe (2015: 1) in his book "Ecolinguistics: Language, Ecology and the Stories We Live By" states that ecolinguistics is a unique study because on one side it examines the subject and on the other hand it talks about ecology at the same time, while both occupy separate regions deep in human life. However, upon closer examination, it was found that true linguistics is a study that can be a bridge to the preservation of the natural environment by linking its studies with language ecology and socio-culture.

5. LITERARY ECOLOGY (ECOCRITICS)

In the early 1970s an American-based environmental love movement emerged as a reaction to modernism. These people are known to often place the environment as an object. Recognizing this phenomenon, slowly awareness about the increasingly extreme damage to nature has become a study in various fields of science, including in the literary arts. Green literary movements began to emerge, by presenting the environment in literary works to achieve an eco-philosophy. This is believed to be able to save the earth which is being hit by uncertain climate change. World news in that decade

campaigned for environmental protection and stated clearly that humans are one of the main causes of global climate change. Until finally, a new term emerged in the field of literature called literary ecology.

In 1996, Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm announced their ideas about ecocriticism, through an essay entitled "The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology". Glotfelty applies the concept of ecology to literature, the approach of which is carried out by making the earth (nature) the center of his studies. Ecocriticism itself can be simply defined as a study of the interplay between literature and the environmental (Glotfelty, 1996).

Another expert interested in working on ecocritical studies is Garrard (2004). Garrard (2004) explains that eco-criticism explores ways in which we imagine and describe the relationship between humans and the environmental in all fields of cultural outcomes. Ecocriticism was inspired by (also as a critical attitude of) modern environmental movements. Garrard traced the development of the movement and explored concepts related to ecocriticism, as follows: (a) pollution, wilderness, disaster (apocalypse), housing/dwelling, animals, and earth.

Ecocritics aim to show how literary works care about the environment and can play some part in solving real and pressing ecological problems (Endraswara, 2016: 53). The urgency of ecocriticism in the study of literature can be done by asking a number of questions such as: 1) How is nature represented in poetry ?; 2) What role can be played by the physical setting (environment) ?; 3) What are the values expressed in ecological (ecological wisdom) ?; 4) How do metaphors about the earth affect the way we treat it ?; 5) How can we characterize writing about nature as a literary genre? (Endraswara, 2016: 39).

6. CHILDREN'S LITERATURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Attention to the environment carried by literature has been going on for a long time, beginning with a number of writings that try to apply an ecocritical perspective to literary works. Two of the most influential are Lawrence Buell's work entitled "The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of America Culture" (1995) and Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm with his work titled "The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology "(1996). Although Glotfelty's work specifically takes context in Main America, the questions and statements he made in introducing his writings on ecocritical readers are relevant to other literary texts, including children's

literature and literary works from other parts of the world.

Children's literature (childrens' literary) is present as a genre that focuses literary products for consumption among children. In texts and culture, children tend to represent nature with a garden full of flowers, wild but attractive forests, fresh mountain air, animals, plants and creatures that are easily captured and brave, flesh and blood, wood, metal and various types natural color. Children are often curious about various natural phenomena that are ideal, for example how a threatening or frightening environment can be changed or restored. Nature, as presented to children and young adults in literary texts, pictures, films, games, applications and outdoor activities and education, can influence the way they understand and overcome the challenges actually experienced by the surrounding environment.

Sajid (2016: 1) describes an interesting experience regarding children and the environment: "I work in kindergarten as an Early Childhood Educator and every year I observe the children in my class - aged between 3 and 6 years - showing great attention, curiosity, empathy, and love for their environment as they live their day; they care about the living (plants, animals) and non- living objects (stones or sky) around them "

A child's mind, unlike an adult's mind, can absorb anything and accept a number of new ideas. For this reason, it is not always good to teach "right" ideas to children. Scientific thinking and understanding are important, but imagination must also be encouraged. (Johnson & Giorgis, 2014: 1). The imagination of the environment found by children in literary texts gradually arouses concern, awareness and their love for a beautiful and well-preserved environment.

In Indonesia, the history of the development of children's literature has begun since the 70s. At the beginning of its development, a number of children's literary works emerged that presented family stories and children's lives involving the environment as the background. Just mention some of them are Djoko Lelono's *Anak Rembulan: Negeri Misteri di Balik Pohon Kenari* (2011), Dwiyanto Setyawan through his phenomenal works in the 80-90s era such as the Series: *Sersan Grung- Grung* dan seri *Kelompok 2 & 1*, and *Arswendo Atmowiloto's Kiki dan Komplotannya*, serial *Imung*, dan *Keluarga Cemara*. The latest is the emergence of an Indonesian children's book writer named Okki Madasari, who debuted in writing children's books in 2018, by presenting the Series of *Mata Menjelajahi Nusantara: Mata di Tanah Melus* (2018), *Mata dan Manusia Laut* (2019), *Mata dan rahasia Pulau Gapi* (2019).

7. CONCLUSION

The Series of Mata Menjelajah Nusantara presents a very thick Indonesian environment, reading these books will open up the experiences of Indonesian children about the condition of the archipelago environment that they have probably never heard of. The environmental representations in these books raise the lexicon and natural metaphors of Indonesia as the background, such as: oceans, stretched green valleys, villages in the middle of the sea, hills to special animal species which are philosophically very closely related to Indonesian traditions and culture.

1. “*Mereka tak pernah pakai bom dan berbagai racun untuk menangkap ikan, Bagi mereka, itu akan melanggar larangan Sang Penguasa Lautan*” (Madasari 2019:35)

“They have never used bombs and various poisons to catch fish, For them, that would violate the prohibition of the Lord of the Seas” (Madasari 2019: 35).

2. “*Semua orang Sama menangkap ikan dengan jarring dan kedo-kedo. Kedo-kedo itu semacam pancing yang mereka buat sendiri dengan serabut kelapa zaman dahulu kala*” (Madasari,2019:34)

“All the same people catch fish with a *jarring* and *kedo-kedo*. *Kedo-kedo* are a kind of fishing rod that they made themselves with ancient coconut fibers” (Madasari, 2019: 34). The text excerpts from *Mata dan Manusia Laut* above shows that environmental representation is represented as a matter of great care. How is the sea protected from chemicals to save the fish that live in it.

The book series Mata Menjelajahi Nusantara: Mata dan Manusia Laut can be read by children aged nine years to 12 years, that can be read by teenagers and adults. Rahman (2019: 12) states that good children's literature is children's books that are not only well read by children but are also attractive to adult readers. Children's literature is a work that has been created for the benefit of children.

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